

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: April 14, 2021 PLACE: Virtual Meeting TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:00 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Public Hearing

PRESENT: Jeff Brown, Chairman; Jason Cohen; Janet Buck; Payson Whitney
Ingrid Marchesano, Clerk to the Board; Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner;
Larry Field, Senior Planner

REGULAR MEETING

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Janet Buck motioned to approve Minutes of March 10, 2021 Planning Board meeting.

Payson Whitney seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In favor

CASES CONTINUED

- **57-105 Coolidge Ave (99 Coolidge Ave); ARE-MA Region No.77, LLC – Special Permit Master Plan & Final Site Plan Review**

Gideon Schreiber, this is a request for a Special Permit Master Plan & Site Plan Review. It is a very substantial petition. The presentation will start tonight and will be continued to the next Planning Board meeting on May 12, 2021.

Katie Snyder, National Development, in Partnership with Alexandria Real Estate, this is a petition for Master Plan Special Permit/Site Plan Review to demolish all existing buildings and to develop a Life Science building and parking garage on the 6.3 acre site. The National Development is a local company that has been in business for 40 years, we are focused on the Boston market. Developer's conference was in January 2021 and we have participated in number of community meetings, design review, etc. We have attended Conservation Commission meeting last Wednesday night. Town Councilor Angie Kounelis was fundamental in the process. The former Mt Auburn club site is located in the RMUD zoning district. We are proposing 255,000 s.f. Research Development above ground structure and garage. Mix of amenities is nearby, we will have public open space and pedestrian connection. We have been working with DCR, connecting the site to Greenland.

David Manfredi, Architect, we are proposing 5-story building with outdoor space related to the building. 630 onsite parking spaces, 91% in the parking garage, 9% surface parking. Buildings are planned around the open space, corridor will be publicly accessible to all. Parking garage is connected to the Lab building, public nature trails connected to DCR land and Charles River. There are 3 entrances to the site – parking garage, entrance/exit to the site and on the right in only to the loading area. A café will be located on the Southside, loading area will be completely shielded from neighbors. There will be very public space between building and the garage. We have met with Town consultant David Gamble. We are proposing robust infrastructure, bridge will cross between the trees connecting the structures. We are presenting several views, some from Coolidge Avenue and some from the south. Building materials proposed are stone based on the bottom, frame is medium grade metal and high-performance glazing. Corrugated metal for screening of mechanical equipment. Ultra-clear glass and white metal in the center area. The setback from Coolidge Avenue to the building is 22', the garage setback is larger, 15' side yard setback on the east side. The building height allowed is 79', the actual

height of our structure is 73'. We will provide 2 acres of new publicly accessible open space which will include new nature trail. The total increase of open space is 85%.

Richard Hollworth, Engineer VHB, a new bike lane with a connection to Coolidge Ave and DCR network is proposed. This degraded site is uniquely situated and consist of surface parking and tennis courts with significant retaining walls. Majority of the site is covered by impervious surface. There is no storm water management system in place, the runoff is uncontrolled. This is a wonderful opportunity to provide substantial open space, a man-made stream to the west of the site. The stream corridor consist of un-stabilized drainage system. There is no sidewalk along Coolidge Ave. We will present plans to show the difference between existing conditions and the proposed design.

Stan Sadkowski, Eng., we have conducted pre-construction survey and will implement construction methods that would prevent tremors, etc. to protect abutting 125 Coolidge Avenue building. Site will be cleaned up, we will provide dust mitigation. We are required to provide reports during the construction, soil meditation, disposal, etc.

Jean Garbier, Landscape Architect, we are proposing 2 acres of newly created landscape environment. It will include public nature trail, stream and meditation garden. The area next to the stream will be enhanced, green space and landscape expanded. We are looking for long-term landscape, proposing mixed planting buffer, 35' wide. Tree canopy will be expanded. Character along Coolidge Ave will change, connectivity will create pedestrian friendly setting. Streetscape will be activated for pedestrians and bicycles with different materials.

Vinod Kalikiri, VHB Traffic Eng., the timeline of this project started in August 2020. The study scope was reviewed by the DCD&P and DPW staff. Transportation data used for the Study was used prior to Covid19. The Mt Auburn Club was a very active facility, generation traffic all day. We have provided analysis for future traffic. Bicycle accommodation will be provided with crossing on Coolidge Avenue connecting through DCR property. Coolidge Avenue is one way in each direction, 40' wide. We have looked at different ways to address the traffic., we will accommodate all needs. Safe crossing will be controlled by flashing lights, we will make sure that the system will be designed safely. Trail has been created to DCR property, pending DCR approval.

Katie Snyder, we have received many questions from the staff and the neighbors. Alexandria will manage the property, securing the site during evening hours. We do not have a tenant yet, the site can accommodate one large one or several smaller companies. The community was concerned regarding noise, very robust study was completed, and the project met all the requirements. Additional questions about hours of operation, dust, etc. were answered. The project will have LEED Gold certification, multi model connections and will be beneficial to the neighborhood.

Gideon Schreiber, questions will be answered as part of the record.

Payson Whitney, this was a very thorough presentation, it should be placed on the Town website. What are the primary contaminates, is there any limitation on where the open space can be? The mechanical equipment penthouse should be counted as part of the height. The one way seems to be wider, can vegetation buffer be provided? Why the stark wall on the Coolidge Ave side?

Stan Sadkowski, Sanborn Head, the site had gasoline, historic fill of the neighborhood. Any open space must have 3 feet of cover.

David Manfredi. It has to do with uses of the building. The south side has series of steps with terrific views.

Katie Snyder, the grade condition issued can be further studied, the design is challenged by the grade.

Janet Buck, I am familiar with the site and very delighted by the cleanup. 2 acres of open space are very important and as well stormwater management plan. This is very positive project, we are very interested in comments from the neighbors.

Jason Cohen, this was a very important presentation. I am very excited about the terraces facing the DCR land and Charles River. Will the clear glass remain? Can the penthouse be setback when the mechanical layout is done, all the space might not be needed? What are the materials shown on the decks on both sides of the pedestrian bridge? As a member of the Mt.Auburn club, this is a great proposal for the future. Hopefully, area for shadow parking will not be needed.

Jeff Brown, Katie and David, this was remarkable presentation. How do you determine the size of the building and the garage if there is no specific tenant? I have walked the site, I am concerned with the stream activity, it is a significant piece of the design. Will there be a fence between this site and the DCR property?

Katie Snyder, the decks at the bridge will be wood. The size depends on the tenant demand, what are tenants looking for. We will start demolition in the summer, construction will be completed in 2 years, 2023.

Patty Battle, 125 Coolidge Ave, when was the traffic study done? There is no talk about public transportation. The Arsenal on the Charles has vans that bring people to Harvard Square. DCR is contaminated land. We are concerned about more development coming to Coolidge Ave. HVAC system and other mechanical equipment will make noise, block our sun, cars and bikes will create more traffic.

Gideon Schreiber, this is a public hearing, and the petitioner is presenting the project to the Planning Board. This is not community meeting with questions and answers,

Al Gordon, Horizon East Condos, we have submitted written testimony, we are in receipt of other communication from the developer. The developer is proposing driveway to be one way coming in only.

Gideon Schreiber, it was proposed by the staff, it would make a conflict when cars are coming from Horizon Condos.

Angie Kounelis, District A Town Councilor, thank you to the development team for working with everyone. There is an increase in traffic on daily basis. The proposed traffic signal at Coolidge Avenue and Grove Street is important.

Libby Shaw, Trees for Watertown, we want to see the existing natural habitat preserved. The proposed plans look beautiful, the existing stream has been part of the habitat for long time, animals are living in the area, a drastic amount of change is proposed now. We are encouraging preservation of the animals that have lived there for a long time. Do not take down the veteran trees, the functional existing habitat needs to be protected.

Susan LaDou, I want to see a focus on energy, we need to know how much energy will be used, how much will be produced.

Hal Shear, how comfortable are we in the open space area that has been contaminated?

Morris Trichon, we heard that this project would comply with all the regulations. Are there any new information or environmental studies regarding this site? What kind of impact will this project have on the neighborhood during the demolition and construction?

Gideon Schreiber, often we have conditions that are in the staff report that are required prior to issuance of a building permit. The Planning Board when votes, can add additional conditions.

Katie Snyder, we will have to provide some of the information to the Conservation Commission and that will become public information.

Jason Cohen, these are valid concerns, the Board considers broad range of factors, but we will refer to DEP. Tonight is not the forum for that.

Arleen Levy, it was gratifying to talk to Katie but I am concerned with traffic. Narrowing conditions on Coolidge Ave cannot sustain large trucks that need the width of the road to turn. Location of the bike lane is a problem, it belongs on the other side. I am concerned with the size of the penthouse, the property is very close to 125 Coolidge Ave. Without knowing who the tenant will be, this structure is as large as allowed, more flexibility is needed.

Jennifer, Horizon, I would like to welcome the developer. I have lived here for 20 years, we know the existing traffic, there are 400 cars from our building daily. There was never more than 40-60 people coming to the club. We also have UPS and the cement company nearby with Dunkin Donuts on the corner. 2 years of construction will impact me greatly.

Jennifer Tager, this part of Watertown buildings used to be net0, it does not need more carbon emission, it will have impact on the entire Town.

Curtis Meininger, traffic studies were probably done under realistic conditions. The large UPS and trucks will not be able to turn.

Libby Shaw, how will be the green space be maintained? I work at MIT, the noise coming from the mechanical equipment is very loud.

Payson Whitney, it would be helpful if a summary of all the tonight's comments and discussion is provided to the Board.

Jason Cohen, will there be more questions at the May meeting?

Gideon Schreiber, it is up to the Board discretion. Lot of tonight questions can be answered by staff and will also be peer reviewed.

Janet Buck, it would be helpful if the public were instructed how to find the submitted materials.

Janet Buck motioned to continue the petition to the May 12, 2021 Planning Board meeting.

Payson Whitney seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In Favor

Janet Buck motioned that the Planning Board will continue for 1-2 family projects to go directly to the Zoning Board of Appeals without a Planning Board report.

Jason Cohen seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In Favor

OTHER BUSINESS

Jeff Brown adjourned the meeting at 9:40 pm.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:40 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____

For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 4/14/2021 available in the DCD&P office.